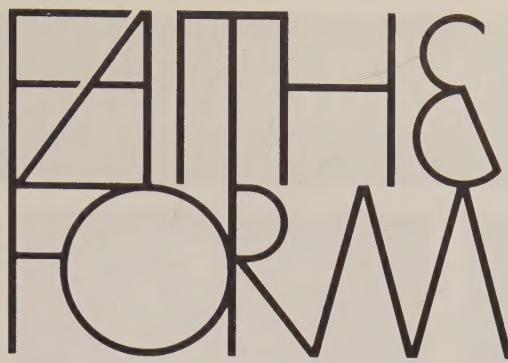
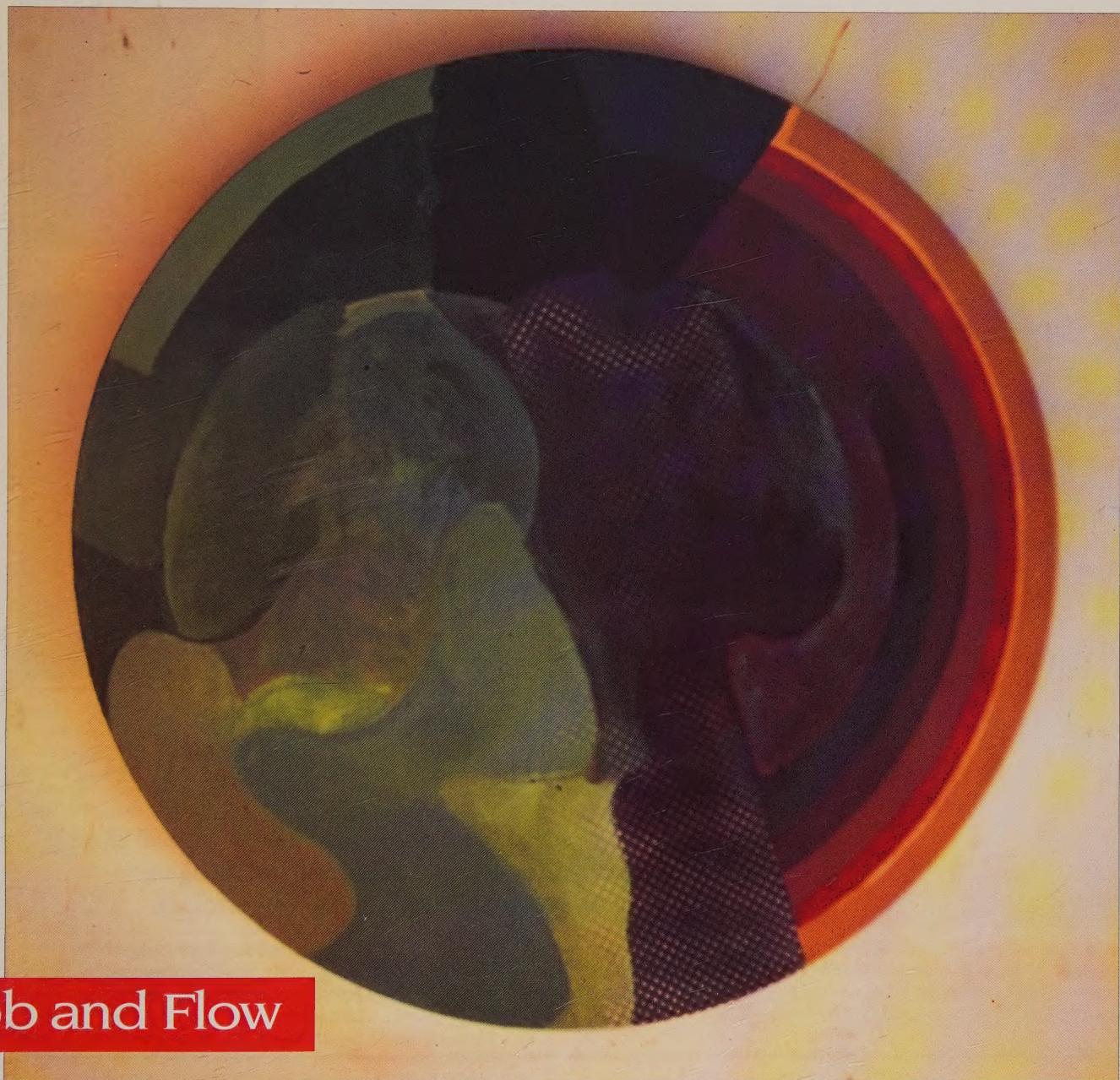


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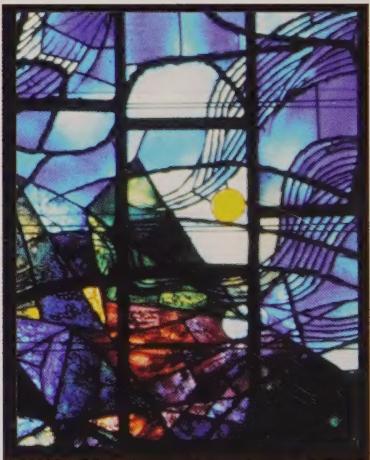
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Left: **Har Zion Temple**, Penn Valley, PA. Architect Stanford G. Brooks, AIA, and Associates. Center: **Congregation Ezra Bessaroth**, Seattle, WA. Architect Durham, Anderson, Freed. Right (top): **Keneseth Israel Synagogue**, Elkins Park, PA. Windows designed by Jacob Landau, executed by the Willet Studios. Right (bottom): **Temple Beth Zion**, Buffalo, NY. Architect Harrison & Abramovitz. Windows designed by Ben Shahn, executed by the Willet Studios.

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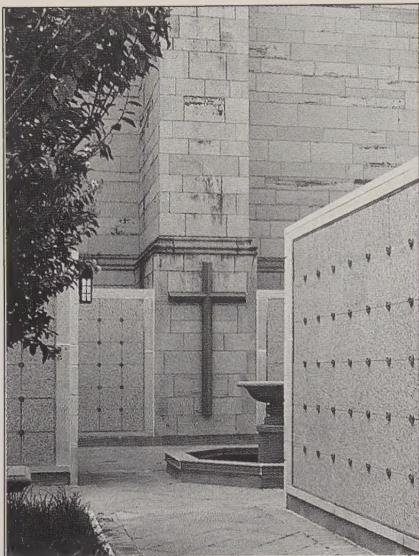
The abstraction by Jack Wolfe, Stoughton, Massachusetts, expresses visually the theme of this issue: "Ebb and Flow." His work is found in the Whitney Museum, New York City; the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; the DeCordova Museum and the Rose Museum at Brandeis University. He recently completed 24 very large scale portraits of American Indians that comprise *Survivors of the American Holocaust*.



Long Shadow

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# Notes & Comments

## An Inspiration

IFRAA's long-time friend, Harold Fisher still goes into the office every day though he celebrated his 98th birthday this year. His work through the years has included designs of numerous churches across Metro Detroit and the Midwest, always emphasizing the importance of classic design. Highly regarded, he recently received the Arthur Ross Award from the president of Classical America for his contribution to architecture across the country. (Detroit News)

## Removed from the Endangered List

The Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City has undergone an extensive rehabilitation, including the interior and a reconstruction of its foundation. This signature cathedral begun in 1567, has been sinking into a spongy subsoil over the last century. Architect Serges Saldivar is to be congratulated for this successful project. The cathedral contains many prized works of art, which will be newly celebrated during its 675th year.



Metropolitan Cathedral, Mexico City. Serges Saldivar, architect.

## Is It Too Late?

The First Baptist Church of Sedgwick, ME, was built in the early 1800s and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but its congregation has dwindled (8-10) and soon the current members will be gone. The design of the church is classic New England with four Doric columns and a gold-leaf steeple. But it is special because its stained glass windows are believed to have been designed by students of Tiffany, including three by himself. The sanctuary windows have been appraised at over a million dollars apiece. Unfortunately, this architectural treasure is in desperate need of restoration. Tim Laitinen of Arlington, TX, whose mother attends this church, sees it marching toward oblivion and reminds us that many small, out-of-the-way churches face the same problem. In the next few decades, these structures from the nation's early years may be gone.

## Congratulations to:

- Arthur Stern, Benicia, CA, who was recently presented an AIA Award that reads: "The large body of award winning stained glass by Arthur Stern has served as an inspiration for a generation or more users of architecture." The AIA East Bay recently presented him with its 1999 Colleague Award.
- Kenji Suzuki of di Dominico & Partners in New York City, who won top prize in the Building Community Habitat for Humanity in the New Millennium program, given by AIA Young Architects.
- The Board of Extension of the Disciples of Christ denomination, whose stated purpose is to help churches plan and provide facilities for Christian witness and service.
- Father Michel Maslowsky, the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, and sculptor Michael



Stained glass windows by Arthur Stern at St. John's Medical Center, Longview, WA.

PHOTO: BLAKE PRAYTOR

Magrath, who together researched the lifestyle and philosophy of Jesus as an itinerant preacher. This led to the creation of the Stations of the Cross, a sculpture in bronze for the altar, and in the future a life-size madonna for the grotto.



St. Irene Church, Frankfurt, Illinois.  
Harding Associates, architect.

wife Sandra about their mutual interest in saving New Canaan's rich concentration of modern architecture.

- **Ellen Mandelbaum**, glass artist, whose work on the chapel windows for Marian Woods in Hartsdale, NY, will soon be dedicated. The project, by architect David Mamina, involved five orders of nuns who have come together to make this assisted living facility on an old estate.
- Five of today's outstanding Catholic artists: Keith Johnson (painter), the Counter-current Artisans of Peru (woodcarving), Mary Billingsley and John Watt (painters), and Tomas Fernandez (metal work), whose work was featured in a conference in Mystic, CT, sponsored by the St. Michael Institute of Sacred Art.
- The Interfaith Alliance (TIA), which recently announced its 2000 Walter Cronkite Faith and Freedom Awards.



Walter Cronkite Faith and Freedom Award recipients, from left, Tom Brokaw, Kusum Patel and Jim Miller with Walter Cronkite and TIA Executive Director Welton Gaddy.

asked that the new stained glass windows to be installed in their churches and include at least 50 percent women. Among the women included are Elizabeth Seton, founder of Sisters of Charity; Kateri Tekakurtha, the first Native American proposed for canonization; Katherene Drexel, the Philadelphia heiress who founded congregations to help American Indians and African Americans; and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Nobel Prize winner. Richard Chartrand, president of St. Michael Liturgical Arts, Norwood, MA, is the designer.

- **Partners for Sacred Places**, which has received a \$1.2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment to continue its help to communities that are guardians for older and historic places. Robert Jaeger and Diane Cohen have spoken to IFRAA conferences about their important work.
- **Papadatos Associates**, New York City, which recently won four awards: Two for religious projects: Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Dallas, TX, and the Cathedral of Saints Constantine and Helen in Brooklyn, NY.
- **Orr/Houk and Associates**, Nashville, TN, for its renovation of Judson Baptist

• **Harding Associates**, Chicago, IL, which was given an Honor Award by the AIA Chapter of Northeast Illinois for St. Irene's Church in Frankfurt, IL.

• **Moravian College**, Bethlehem, PA, which sponsored an exhibit, symposium and concert in its Payne Gallery under the title, "The Arts as a Strategy for Survival." The exhibit, presented in cooperation with the Jewish Museum in Prague, displayed drawings of children in the Theresienstadt ghetto, whose teacher Friedl Dicker studied at the Bauhaus with Walter Gropius, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky.

• The *Fairfield County Times* (CT), which interviewed Richard Bergmann about his lifetime interest in sacred spaces, and in the same issue (May 2000), quoted Bergmann and his

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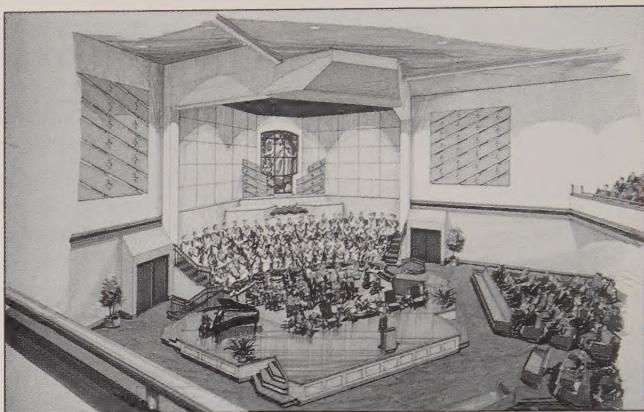
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## Notes & Comments *(continued)*



Judson Baptist Church, Nashville, TN. Orr/Houk and Associates.

Church. The new design treatment includes the renewal of clear glass windows that were the source of visual discomfort, an enlarged platform that will incorporate an orchestra pit, a lighting and scenery grid and an improved sound system.

### Cross Fertilization

Jara Lee, a Brazilian filmmaker, is launching a series of electronic music pieces that interpret the work of architects. She believes that "every physical environment emanates particular sound experiences and emotions." In 1958, LeCorbusier and a Greek musician, Xenakis, and composer Varese collaborated on a "poeme electronique." Jara Lee wants to make a contemporary statement with Tadao Ando and his Water Temple. She later hopes to work with young architects and their expressions of the future. (*Architectural Record*, 06.00)

### A Different Connection

The new stairs at the Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco offer space to gather after services and have become a generous statement, both physically and metaphorically, with the city itself. The former stairs had been tucked behind the chapter house. The new stairs are of reinforced concrete to resist seismic forces with expansion and construction seams that take up some of the stress. (Architects: Turnbull, Griffen, and Haesloop)

### Books

**The Color of Light: Commissioning Stained Glass for a Church** by Sarah Hall, Chicago Training Publications, 1800 N. Hermitage Ave., Chicago, IL 60622-1101. An internationally known glass artist, Hall recently completed a 3,000 sq. ft. window wall for St. Andrew's Church in Columbus, OH.

**Worship Music: A Concise Dictionary** by Edward Foley, Capuchin and Consultants, The Liturgical Press, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500. This book is for people of diverse faith traditions who practice, teach and study the music of worship. Its special focus is on the worship music of English-speaking North America though it is an ecumenical and interfaith venture. □

# FROM MAYBECK TO MEGACHURCHES

## *The Evolution of Religious Architecture in 20th Century America*

By Douglas R. Hoffman



**N**ow that we have turned the corner into the 21st century, surveying the evolution of religious architecture over the past 100 years seems fair game. Starting from 1900, what were the noticeable changes, and what were the constants—the common denominators—that survived through the end of the century? What was the impact of the modern movement in architecture on the designs for religious buildings? Can this evolution provide insight into religious architecture for the new millennium? These are the questions posed and that this review attempts to shed light on.

Just as surely as the 20th century experienced the incubation, growth and maturity of "modern" architecture, that movement also had a profound influence on the designs for houses of worship. Throughout this past century, notable architects (and many not-so-well-known architects) crafted significant new interpretations of sacred space. These fresh interpretations of religious building design—the noteworthy buildings that were milestones of the modernist movement—have become icons of their times. While it would be remiss to overlook the fact there was a strong undercurrent of architectural traditionalism and revival of once favored styles, the more identifiable trend of the 20th century was the relentless push for contemporary iterations of religious space.

### 1900-1920

At the turn into the 20th century, only a



Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley, Calif., 1910. Architect: Bernard Maybeck.

PHOTOS: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTO ARCHIVE



Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois, 1904-08. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.

DOUGLAS HOFFMAN, AIA, is managing editor of *Faith & Form* magazine, a practicing architect in State College, Pennsylvania, and a part-time instructor at Penn State University's Department of Architecture. This article is adapted in part from a lecture given at the 1996 AIA Convention in Minneapolis.

handful of American architects was seriously interested in a new style for the times. To name a few, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in the Midwest, H.H. Richardson and Frank Furness to a lesser

extent in the East and Bernard Maybeck on the West Coast. All were exploring new design concepts in their work. Two benchmark religious buildings in the first decade of the 20th century were the products of

this innovative thinking.

Bernard Maybeck completed the First Church of Christ, Scientist in 1910 in Berkeley, California, and in Oak Park, Illinois, Frank Lloyd Wright completed the Unity Temple project for a Unitarian congregation in 1906. Both churches were built for relatively young and 'non-mainline' denominations. While the Unitarians had been around since the early 1800s, the Christian Scientists had been organized only a few decades before by Mary Baker Eddy. As 'outsider' denominations, there probably was a much stronger urge for a new, and identifiably different style of religious building. Both architects complied with distinctive designs, yet surprising similarities exist between these buildings.

Each architect used exposed concrete, with Wright using it as the principle building material and Maybeck for floors and columns. Maybeck was equally as daring as Wright, utilizing industrial type materials such as exterior asbestos panels and metal framed windows. Both chose rectilinear volumetric enclosures, based on a square floor plan anchored with four equi-spaced piers. Each used these piers both for support and to distribute heating and ventilation. Both architects employed light to their advantage, with Wright using clerestory lighting on the perimeter and overhead skylights, and Maybeck using clerestory windows and large panels of mottled Belgian glass to create an incandescence on the interior. Both evoked a sense of mystery with the exterior styling and ritualistic entry paths.

## 1920s

The religious architecture of the '20s might have been dubbed the era of "more is more," long before "less is more" became vogue. There was a cathedral building boom epitomized by the construction of St. John the Divine in New York City and the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In the heartland of America, (Tulsa, Oklahoma) Barry Byrne completed Christ the King Roman Catholic Church in 1926. The largest and most complex of Byrne's commissions, this church reflected the nationwide interest in Gothic but in a novel, contemporary iteration.

The grand scale of Byrne's Christ the King Church set up a rivalry with the Methodists down the street. They instructed young Bruce Goff to design a bigger, better and taller building than the



Christ the King Roman Catholic Church, Tulsa, Okla., 1926. Architect: Barry Byrne.

PHOTOS: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTO ARCHIVE

Roman Catholic church. Goff, 22, self taught and an ardent admirer of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, used a floor plan from a Sullivan design in Iowa to develop the Boston Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church completed in 1928. Appropriating the form of the New York skyscrapers, one can almost visualize the emerging art deco style, with this 280 foot high bell tower topped with copper, and 30 foot high glass fins. When the sunlight hit the copper and reflected on the glass, the entire tower appeared as a brightly lit torch. Apparently this church continues to be a prominent feature of the Tulsa skyline.

## 1930s & '40s

With the Depression of the '30s, many projects went on hold, including the large American cathedrals already in progress. Meanwhile, architectural innovation was occurring more in Europe than in America. With the rise of fascism, however, there was an exodus of artists and architects that included Josef Albers, Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius & Mies van der Rohe. Suddenly the "International Style" was also appearing in America, with simplicity and "less is more" the new canons of American architecture.

The European-born father and son team of Eliel and Eero Saarinen contributed some of the finest mid-century examples of religious architecture. Starting with their First Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana (1942), this building complex is a series of simple rectangular blocks laid in composition around



Boston Avenue Methodist Church, 1926.  
Architect: Bruce Goff

a central courtyard, originally planned as a reflecting pond. The plan, vaguely reminiscent of a classical basilica, is a simple asymmetric rectangle. Within the sanctuary, the focus is intentionally blurred, although the eye is inevitably drawn to the cross hung on the rear wall. Natural light is admitted from vertical slotted windows along one side wall, creating an interesting, rhythmic pattern to counter-balance the colonnade along the opposite side.

## 1950s & '60s

With the interruption of World War II, the



First Christian Church, Columbus, Ohio, 1942.  
Architects: Eiel and Eero Saarinen.

next spate of religious building occurred in the late 1950s and early '60s. Fresh from global victory and with visions of a new world harmony, the manifest destiny of American religious architecture exclaimed triumph. This period witnessed exploration of evocative forms and experimentation with engineering and religious innovation.

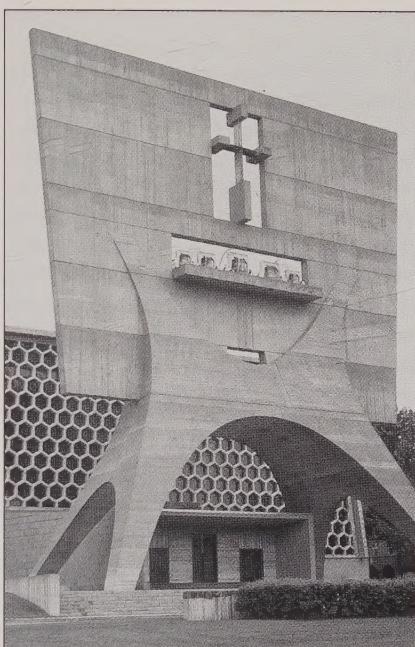
Illustrative of this new period of dramatic form was Frank Lloyd Wright's design of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1959. Although in the last year of his life, Wright was still able to generate a new and distinctively different architectural expression. One can see characteristic Wright touches, but this church also is a form dedicated to a Greek Orthodox congregation and derived from Byzantine antecedents. The design is basically a traditional orthodox dome superimposed over a floor plan in the shape of a Greek cross. The four piers elevating the composition are reinterpretations of the same four corner piers at Unity Temple in Chicago. The placement of the composition in front of a reflecting pool is an effective calming and enhancing medium to create an entirely different mood for the gathering congregation.

In Collegeville, Minnesota, Marcel Breuer boldly reinterpreted the campanile and sanctuary composition in his design for St. John's Abbey (1961). Serving both the resident Benedictine community and St. John's University, this building is a milestone in appearance and liturgical plan organization. A predecessor to the architectural reforms arising from Vatican II (1966), the altar table is thrust center stage between the worshipping monastic community and the



Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Wauwatosa, Wisc., 1959. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.

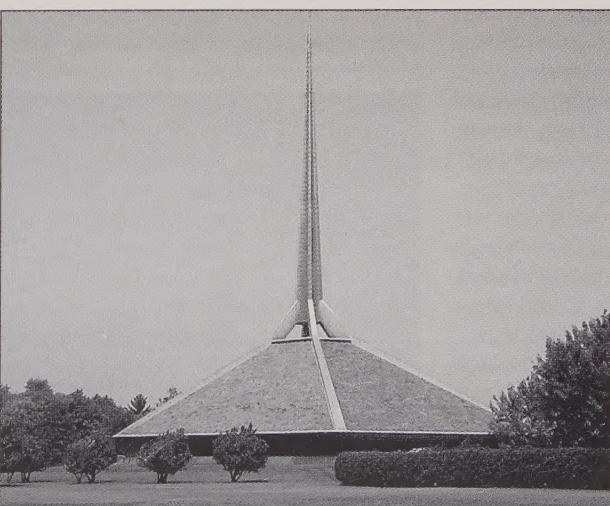
PHOTOS: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTO ARCHIVE



St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., 1961.  
Architect: Marcel Breuer

congregation composed of students and faculty from the university. Expressing a new brutalism fashionable in architecture at the time, Breuer used exposed concrete to craft the sculptural bell tower, now a trademark image for the university.

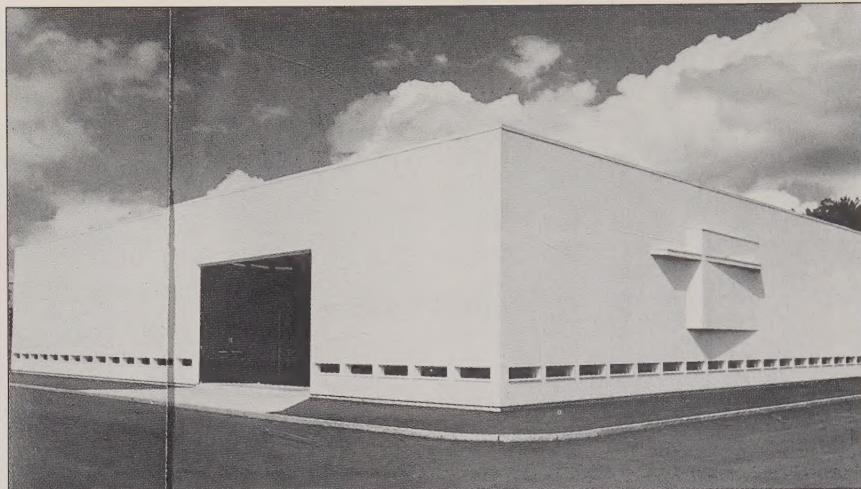
By 1964, Eero Saarinen completed the North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, one of the most significant and inspiring forms in religious architecture at that time. The needlelike point of the central steeple became both the axis mundi pointing to the heavens beyond, and the lightning rod delivering celestial messages to the gathered congregation. The tentlike roof enclosure floats atop a shallow clerestory window, transforming the sanctuary into the primeval cavern of man's first and most primitive dwelling. The mystery of worship is enhanced in this darkened interior, with its glowing perimeter windows and sharply focused altar light cast from the central overhead oculus.



North Christian Church, Columbus, Ohio, 1964. Architect: Eero Saarinen.

## 1970s

The social turmoil of the late 1960s and early '70s manifested itself in a significant shift of emphasis in religious architectural design. The single purpose sanctuary, typified by bold, expressive forms, was on the decline. This decade ushered in the rise of multiple-use worship rooms, the new credo of congregations seeking maximum utility from their buildings. Perhaps arising from escalating building and



Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church, East Hartford, Conn., 1973. Architect: RGvD Inc.

energy costs, from shrinking denominational resources, or simply as an extension of the social-relevancy movement of the time, the keyword was 'flexibility.'

Prototypical of this flexibility is the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in East Hartford, Connecticut, which was completed in 1973. Designed by Russell Gibson von Dohlen, Inc., this was the ultimate utilitarianism, a square box with exposed ceiling trusses and mechanicals, a simple capsule-shaped space for utilities, and a completely flexible seating area. Natural light is admitted by the floor level slotted windows that punctuate the building's perimeter.

On the West Coast, Bethlehem Lutheran Church built in Santa Rosa, California, blends the expressive form movement of the '60s with the demand for flexibility in the '70s. Designed by Duncombe, Roland & Miller in 1972, the building demonstrates both the expressiveness of form as imagery, i.e., the sacred mountain, and the symbolic use of triangular geometry to represent the Christian Trinity. The floor plan, however, is entirely flexible with movable seating and chancel furniture.

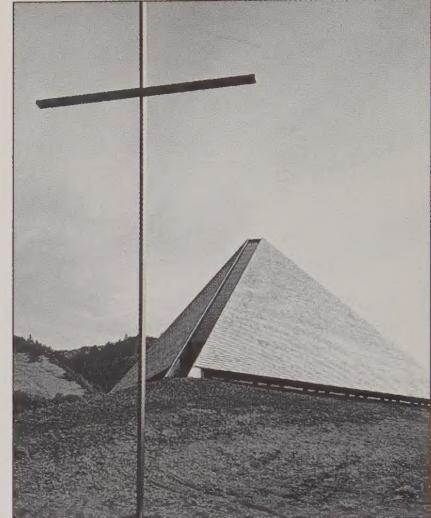
#### 1980s

The 1980s saw the emergence of large membership churches or megachurches, as they are now commonly known. Characterized by huge congregations, charismatic leadership, multiple services, and no denominational affiliation, the megachurches tended to reach out to the urban and suburban "non-churches."

Perhaps the first and most famous of the megachurch phenomenon was the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, home to the televangelism

ministry of the Reverend Robert Schuller. Completed in phases, the main sanctuary was opened for services in 1980. Designed by Philip Johnson, this religious reinterpretation of the crystal palace is shaped like a four pointed star. The building is huge, measuring 207 by 415 feet, and rising to a height of 128 feet. Clad in mirrored glass over a uniform space frame, the design boasts passive solar heating and wind cooling obtained through operable strips of ventilating windows. Originally planned to be set amid a park-like environment, the building now sits amidst a parking lot. Portions of the exterior walls open, allowing congregants to remain in their cars while viewing the worship service.

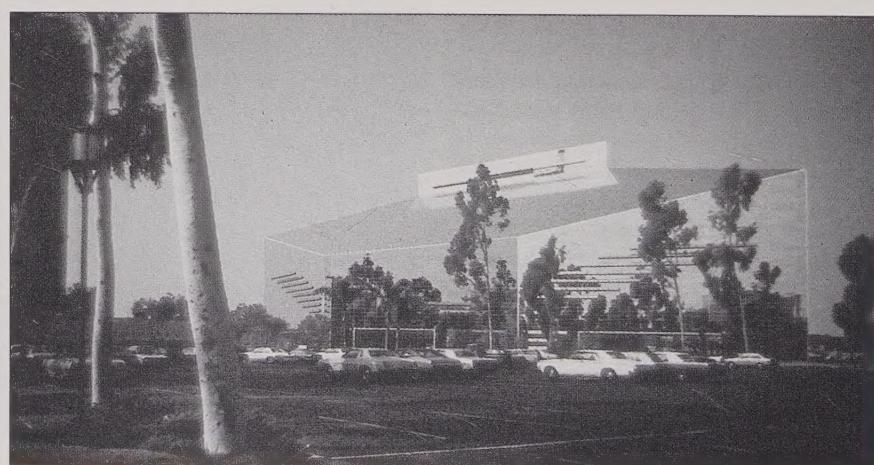
Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, is another of the heralded megachurches, with numerous articles appearing about the charismatic pastor, his 300-person church ministry staff, and even an architectural critique appearing in the *New York Times*.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Santa Rosa, Calif., 1972. Architect: DRM

The 60,000 square foot complex included an auditorium sized to seat 4,500, numerous classrooms, chapel, banquet hall, gymnasium, library and recreational activity center. As Paul Goldberger noted in his *New York Times* review, this megachurch is characterized by a distinct absence of Christian symbolism and coupled with the adjacent food court takes on the appearance of a suburban mall. The building is intentionally non-church like, since the ministry is to reach those who have rejected or never accepted traditional denominational church ministry.

Goldberger further mused the architecture is "friendly and accessible, determined to banish the sense of mystery and otherworldliness that has long been at the very heart of the architecture of Christianity." Three architecture firms were retained for various phases of the commission.



Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, Calif., 1980. Architect: Philip Johnson



Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Ill., 1984.  
Architects: Several



Gates of the Grove Synagogue, Easthampton, N.Y., 1987. Architect: Norman Jaffe.

## 1990s

The trend of the '90s may have been the growth of cultural pluralism evidenced in religious architecture in the form of a regional vernacularism. The Gates of the Grove Synagogue, designed by Norman Jaffe and erected in Easthampton, New York, exhibits a wood shake exterior cladding typical of the residential context in this eastern tip of Long Island. While the exterior form is reminiscent of the old wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe, the building is decidedly contemporary with large bands of skylights and rich usage of finished light woods. The bimah is a free-standing table, set against the backdrop of the ark and framed by glass vistas of the natural park-like setting of the exterior.

As with many modern interpretations of spatial development, the knife edge separation between interior and exterior allows the sanctuary to flow easily to the outside. This transparency recalls the original tabernacles of the Jews of pre-temple times, when the place for worship was a carefully prescribed tent structure that was erected and dismantled as needed.

Another example of this regional vernacularism is the Santa Maria de la Paz Roman Catholic Church erected in 1994 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The architects of Johnson, Nestor, Montier and Rodriguez managed to successfully integrate Anglo, Hispanic and Native American cultures into this traditional, yet contemporary church building. Exhibiting a Southwestern adobe-like exterior, the interior begins to fully embrace a multiculturalism. The large, central gathering area, or narthex, faces the sanctuary like the outdoor courts of Spanish colonial churches. Entering the nave through massive hand-hewn wood doors, congre-

gants pass a large contemporary font constructed of stone and metals donated by the worshipping congregation. The corbels overhead were handcrafted by members of the congregation in the tradition of Spanish mission churches, while the exposed timbers are reminiscent of Native American pueblos. The plan is concentric seating around three sides of a central platform for the table. The backdrop for worship is a skylit apse with cathedra chair for the priest and floor-mounted wooden cross.

## Conclusion

Are there common denominators to the examples mentioned in this article? Yes, if you account for the diversity of religious faiths and cultural backgrounds.

Certainly a common characteristic of many of these churches is the successful and unusual introduction of natural light. Whether through overhead skylights focused on the altar, unseen windows admitting a wash of light across a suspended cross, or through direct and indirect vistas to the exterior, natural light is a critical ingredient.

Second, simple, geometric plans such as squares, triangles and hexagons are common to the most dramatic of the examples shown. Some would label these sacred geometries, not unlike the mandalas of Eastern faiths.

Third, there is the vertical axiality of the campanile, the spire, the divining rod that points to a higher authority and directs transcendent energy to us here on earth. Known as the axis-mundi it is one of the most common elements of religious architecture.

Fourth, the use of volume of space to inspire. Even the intentionally non-churches, i.e., the megachurches, rely on

large volumes of spaces to enhance worship. The act of worshipping together with 4-5,000 people in a single space has to be inspirational for those participating.

Finally, the shape or mass of the buildings themselves frequently evokes a cultural or religious imagery pertinent to that particular faith group. This plumbs the depths of mystery and of archetypal forms, which can produce a sense of understanding that transcends our ordinary secular lives.

From the perspective of historical context, are there identifiable trends that emerged in this review? The answer is a guarded yes. The patterns of architectural evolution seen in 20th century America, starting with experimental modernism and moving to internationalism, brutalism and post-modern eclecticism, all have their religious building counterparts. But this architectural evolution has also been tempered by liturgical reform, changing styles of worship, rapidly changing technologies, and cyclical economic times.

Where are we going from here? With the exception of the occasional megachurch, more modest, regionally vernacular houses of worship seemed to dominate the religious building scene in the last decade of the 20th century. That trend should continue into this first decade of the new millennium. Given our insatiable appetite for new technologies and an ever-increasing speed at which these changes are delivered, however, I suspect we will experience anew the cycle of a dominant architectural trend that rises, matures, and fades from popularity. It took about 100 years for this cycle to play out in the 20th century; the unanswered question is how long will the cycle last in the 21st century? □

# TRADITION BECOMES INNOVATION

By Betty H. Meyer



**M**ost of us will admit that we are tied to tradition in many areas of our lives. Tradition makes us feel more secure, more loyal to the past generation and its history. Moreover, tradition can be fascinating to study and to project into the future. This is especially true with religious tradition; people commonly believe that firmly grounded tradition is the bulwark of faith.

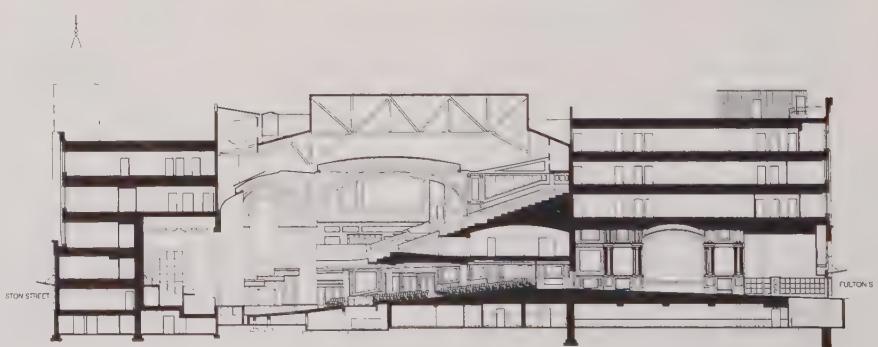
But the late Bartlett Hayes, curator of Addison Gallery in Andover, MA, in his book, *Tradition Becomes Innovation*, suggested that "change is a tradition in itself," that what we regard as tradition is altered as generation follows generation. He further stated that faith is better served by a living society than by the tenets of a moribund one and that tradition should be reappraised. If we examine our architectural past as well as the present, we will observe positive changes in traditional structures. This is in keeping with the tradition of change. Each age forms its own image, which will gradually take its place in history.

Robert Ivy in *Architectural Record* (04.00) tells us that "the global century has arrived." As far back as 1646, a doctor of physics stated, "In order to purchase a warrantable body of truth we must forget and part with much that we have known." What will constitute truth and style in this global century? Charles Jencks has commented that "we exist in a time of unsettled metaphysics that reflects little beyond a polite agnosticism." He projects hope, however, "that architects will crystallize their own spiritual sensitivities and search out explicit forms grounded in their own spiritual sensitivities."

Is it too soon to look for emerging clues that may determine the tradition of



Brooklyn Tabernacle Project, above and below. Kapell and Kostow, architects.



ebb and flow in our generation?

## Combining the Old with the New

We are told that worship today is less influenced by physical trappings than at any other time in this century. Some faiths even make a point of separating divinity from environment and think of the church, the mosque, the synagogue as based on a sense of community rather than on any structure and its furnishings.

Others express a strong desire to return to their roots and purposely choose an earlier style of architecture over a modern one.

A strong movement seen in larger cities is the renovation of secular buildings into places of worship. Groups have organized that call themselves Warehouse Ministries.

• Two Brooklyn churches are finding their homes in converted theaters. The

BETTY H. MEYER is the editor of FAITH & FORM.

Brooklyn Tabernacle (1971) is a non-denominational congregation of nearly 2,000 people and a dozen satellite churches ranging from Harlem, NY, to Lima, Peru. Architects Kapell and Kostow were challenged to restore and renovate the Loew's Metropolitan Theater (1918) and two adjacent buildings into a singular image that would recall the romance of "Old New York" and its turn of the century buildings.

• In Sunnyside, Queens, NY, a large Korean congregation asked architects Garafalo, Lynn and McInturf to renovate an 88,000 sq. ft. former laundry factory into a church with a 2,500-seat sanctuary. They expressed no expectations of a western traditional style. The architects integrated a computer into the design process in a conceptual way rather than the instrumental, and AIA's *Architecture* magazine reports that it is "a composite form combining the old and the new, symmetrical and asymmetrical, monumental and tentative—offering no single reading."

• Calvary Community Church, Westlake Village, CA, was converted by architects Gensler, Dundon and Seeger from a former Defense Department plant into a tilt-up concrete megachurch that deliberately pursues a secular style with minimum symbolism. Resembling a civic center, its design was conceived as a way to attract new people by reinventing the traditional look of a church and the old style of service. The sanctuary is referred

to as a celebration center.

• The Jun Dung So Buddhist Temple in Flushing, NY, has turned a family house into its place of worship. Pagodas have been added and the interior gutted into a single large space with one wall covered with miniature Buddhas. Nearby is a Sikh temple, converted from a church in Richmond Hill, which is almost unaltered in style.

*Is it too soon to look for  
emerging clues that may  
determine the tradition of  
ebb and flow in our  
generation?*

the needs of young adults and that the physical space had to be altered to attract their interest. A design process united the sanctuary and a youth center via an enclosed atrium that revitalized a whole new unity of age groups.

### Mega-Symbols

*Worship at the Video Altar* is a recent book by Gregor Goethals, who was dean of the Graduate School at the Rhode Island School of Design for 29 years and now is the designer for the American Bible Society media projects. Long interested in the role of the artist in a technological society, she was first hired by the Bible Society as an art historian, but now her role has shifted to research and the development of so-called "mega-symbols" that unify videos, the Web pages and CD-ROMs. (*National Catholic Reporter*)

The title of a current exhibit at a non-profit arts center in New York City is *Exit Art: The First World*. Edward Gomez in the *New York Times* comments that the title refers to the end (they hope) of the established art system and its stereotypical way of thinking. Another instance of ebb and flow.

### Compassionate Architecture

After the Kobe earthquake in 1994, Shigeru Ban, a Tokyo-based architect who studied at Cooper Union, established the Volunteer Architects Network, a non-governmental agency of the United Nations. This year he has coordinated the production and shipment of cardboard housing units for refugees in Turkey. Employing steel cables to compress the tubes and a waterproof sponge and adhesive strip, he created miniature one-room houses with operable doors and windows. Plastic beer can crates filled with sand provided the foundations. Congratulations to Shigeru.

### Conclusion

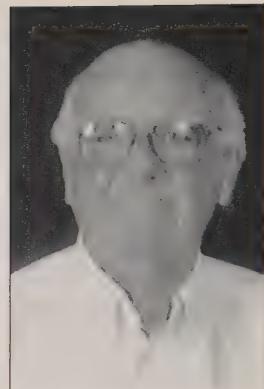
In a sense, we can all be architects, artists and clergy and probe these emerging clues as to what they may tell us about the future of both theology and religious architecture. We can bear in mind these clues are only the beginning of an extended process that will become clearer as time goes by. *Faith & Form* is the journal of what was christened as the Interfaith Forum on Religious Art and Architecture. Is it not our responsibility to seek out and discover manifestations of the Holy wherever they may be found? In this way tradition truly becomes innovation. □



Brooklyn Tabernacle Project, exterior.

# REPORT FROM ROME

By A. Richard Williams

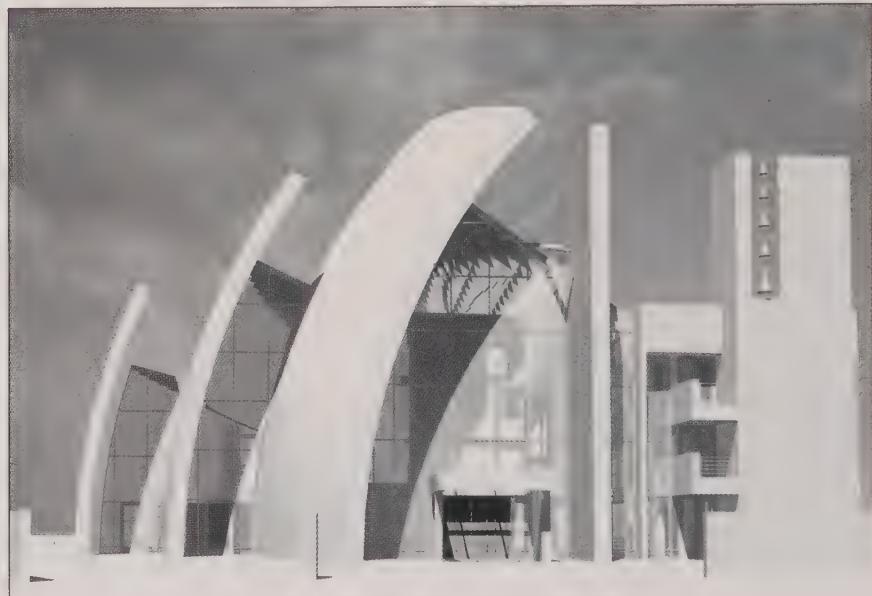


The Fifth International Liturgical Congress hosted by the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy met recently to focus on the subject of Architecture and the Arts at the Service of the Liturgy. Close to 300 people gathered from around the world in high expectation that the provocative agenda would not only distill historic insights and critical judgment but also open up new visions at this turn of the millennium. An impressive selection of prelates and liturgical scholars examined questions of liturgical space, architecture, sacred art and iconography with responses from architects, artists, critics and educators.

Cardinal Virgilio Noe, Vicar General of Vatican City, welcomed participants to the Congress underscoring its timeliness in bringing all involved with renovation and new construction still closer in the understanding and interpretation of liturgical doctrine as the church faces the future. Yet, in looking ahead, he and other authoritative clergy and well-established Italian scholars, architects and critics continued to reflect a preference for conservative/traditional spatial forms, styles and rich iconographic symbolism.

A similar traditional outlook was taken by Americans Mons. Francis Mannion, president of the Society of Catholic Liturgy, and Prof. Duncan Stroik of Notre Dame University, who affirmed this advocacy in terms of even more specific guidelines of form and detail. This seeming consensus was surprising in view of the choice of Richard Meier's contemporary design for the Church of the Jubilee Year 2000, now under construction in Rome (featured in *Faith & Form* No. 2, 1998).

The most forward-looking presentations were made by two priests: Fr.



Church of the Year 2000, Rome, Italy. Architect: Richard Meier & Partners.

PHOTO: RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS ARCHITECTS

*It would appear that "traditionalism" in church art and architecture would prevail over an ongoing quest for a new freshness, a new richness and beauty of spiritual space . . .*

Frederic Debuyst, OSB, from Belgium, whose poetic interpretation of the work of Calfeldt and Guardini (and other less known architects of small churches and chapels) revealed qualities of refreshing simplicity—open and prophetic; and Fr. Gabriel Chavez de la Mora, OSB, from Mexico, an architect who conveyed the same spirit.

While there was some debate, in the view of the majority of participants in the Congress, it became clear that further mutations in liturgical form foreshadowed by Vatican

II would face increasing opposition. It would appear that "traditionalism" in church art and architecture would prevail over an ongoing quest for a new freshness, a new richness and beauty of spiritual space through humility, simplicity and a new respectfully sensitive orchestration of all the arts in celebration of the liturgy. □

A. RICHARD WILLIAMS, FAIA, is a visiting architect at the American Academy in Rome.

# A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON SPIRITUAL SPACE

By A. Richard Williams

**O**n the threshold of the millennium, taking stock of directions in architecture is as daunting as predicting changes in all of society. The crystal ball is cloudy as never before. In contrast with the past, when religious architecture was a clear expression of human aspiration, its distinction is increasingly lost in the blur of today's built environment. But even so, some traces of enduring value may be found, gems that are not limited to places of worship.

In our search we must begin with a candid view of today. Perhaps the greatest cultural changes are in the fields of the social sciences, economics, history and philosophy, but changes also are occurring in the fields of art and architecture, in music and theology, in congregations and organizations. A critical reflection must include all the voices of change.

Architecture has been described as a "mirror of civilization" and given an honored place in human culture. But now this traditional regard is threatened by a passing parade of cliché-ridden styles generated by rampant materialism, celebrity and media inflation. The result is that in the popular eye, architecture has become a skin-deep cosmetic. Such blatant examples as Las Vegas and Branson, Missouri, with their showy

fronts and cheap metal behinds, are echoed in countless commercial strips, malls, and Disney Worlds across America and around the world.

The dignity and significance of civic institutions—government buildings, libraries, museums, theaters and churches—had clear identity in the past



*The Resurrection Funeral Chapel (1941) by Erik Briggman in Turku, Finland, is enhanced with lighting achieved by a horizontal glass wall facing a pine-wooded terrace. Natural light is intensified at the altar area as the wall becomes vertical.*

through a differentiation of spiritual and functional expression. They were recognized as having permanent value that rose above style, mannerism or fashion. But for half a century now, expediency, profit, speed and a throw-away mentality have degenerated this cultural tradition of civic identities into cheap look-alike boxes, often with equally cheap decoration.

The scholarship of art and architectural history has provided standards for

measuring architectural excellence, but critical judgment has been limited by preoccupation with outward visual characteristics and relative neglect of invisible qualities, such as substance, context, ethical questions and the integration of hidden forms of energy. Ironically, the classification of architecture (along with painting and sculpture) as art has lessened its appreciation as a cultural value.

Although scholars and professionals have long tried to bring this to the attention of the public, architectural criticism in the popular media is still relegated to journalist art critics. These journalists often joust with "smart" writing about appearances, just as some celebrity architects strive to gain attention by designing outrageous architecture based largely on superficial eye appeal.

In contradiction, criteria of excellence have become broader through the accumulation of knowledge, research, publication, libraries and the Internet. The search for canonicity in architecture has become a stern discipline involving both timeless and timely components that are never permanently fixed but in dynamic equilibrium.

We are positioned in a time warp—a replay of Charles Dickens' beginning in *A Tale of Two Cities*. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." A bewildering complexity of opposites with twilight/sunrise zones between.

It is the best of times for the "have" nations: It is the worst of times for the "have nots," for the majority of people yearning for equal opportunity, for education, housing, health care and employment. The twilight zone in between is filled with questions and debate. Is high tech good or bad? Are media and celebrity inflation good or bad? Is it good or bad that millions are spent on private and public indulgence? Are giant mergers and internationalism good or bad? The list is endless.

The sunrise zone is more optimistic.

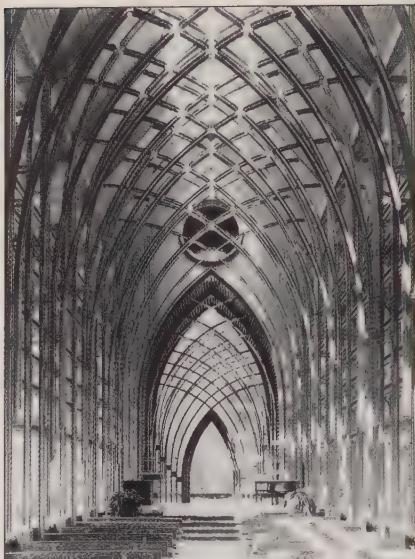
**A. RICHARD WILLIAMS, FAIA, is a professor of architecture emeritus at the University of Illinois and distinguished professor of architecture at the University of Arizona. He is author of the book *The Urban Stage* and numerous articles on religious architecture and urban and regional design. As a practicing architect, he has studios in Tucson, Arizona, and St. Ignace, Michigan.**

*This article is abbreviated for space purposes from Dr. Williams' article in *Reformed Review*, a journal of the Western Theological Seminary. The Spring 2000 issue was a tribute to Donald J. Bruggink, IFRAA's much respected professional colleague and tour guide.*

There remains a middle ground of steadfast tradition, a middle ground that awaits a new enlightenment and a faith that reform can succeed.

What is to be the canon or measuring rule for this reform? Quentin Anderson, in an interview titled "The Hazards of American Individualism," points to Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau as champions of the idea that as individuals we try to define ourselves out of context with our history. "This example seems to me priceless. It shows that radical individualism is a dead end and that a respect for history and for one's own history of the self is the first step to take if you want out of that dead end. We cannot free ourselves from membership in a species that is capable of both glorious and terrible things." I see architecture also trapped in a similar dead end, often unwilling to suppress ego and self-gratification on the part of both owner and architect, ignoring community context as well as history.

Early in my 50 years as an architect, the client expected and was given quality performance that included grace, beauty,



*Thorncrown Chapel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, by Fay Jones, FAIA, draws one into an interior of intimacy, with a sequence of glass and solid material intersections. Filtered light and shadow give one a sense of silence.*

landscape, harmony, and respect for the community—all this beyond meeting the immediate needs of the client's program. Even after the depression and World War II architects and clients stood firm in this regard. In scarcely one generation this dedication has almost disappeared. Sadly, it is sometimes as true of the church architect and client, as it is of the secular.

What happened? Could it be the dominance of bottom line economics and specialization? Or that civic responsibility had become less than idealistic? A shocking experience of value shift occurred in the early '70s when I presented the design of a new county courthouse to a board of supervisors. The concept was based on an open ground floor plan and courts above with limestone walls projecting and forming an overhang on all sides. The old courthouse, the civic auditorium, the city hall and the post office were all limestone. The committee's reaction was "too much money. Make it straight up and down. Cut out the limestone."

Nevertheless, I believe that a broad reservoir of trust and integrity continues to exist in our society, and that it can be recalled to higher quality new architecture as before and as it still exists in the preservation of historic buildings of recognized architectural experience.

Witness similar changes in architectural education, after being fragmented from one discipline into many special-

ties. Now it is recognized that theory and practice cannot be rivals and that design cannot be separated from buildability. I dare to hope that even in our public primary and secondary schools it may be decided to once again include the art of craft and good design.

Increased world travel means that more Americans will be experiencing the great architecture of history. But much less well known are fine examples of contemporary religious architecture. Most of these are modest in scale and in remote locations. I think it is probably fair to say that in the 20th century, excellence in church architecture has been reached more fully in Europe than in America. Here, most architecture for worship has clung to conservative revivalism, diluted and cheapened by expediency, minimal budgets and fast track imperatives. To this condition must be added the rise of TV evangelism and its influence on worship as entertainment. The decline of religious purpose in our American culture is a puzzling question.

It is hard to imagine a reversal in the immediate future. Still the finest work of the immediate past can have enormous influence and lead to a spiritual renaissance if we can sensitize architects and congregations to its contributions. Our widely separated achievements underscore that a single style or formula is not the answer. It is rather the adherence to canonic principles that may result in a diversity of approaches, but will combine magnificently as if preordained.

We have an educational obligation to respect and delight in accumulating learning and wisdom from the greatest works of history and the newest work of excellence. We need to ensure that the principle of excellence in diversity is understood and respected as a fundamental readable common quality, transcending superficial differences in fashion and style, possessing qualities that are both timeless and timely. Martin Buber spoke of an "existence will," an in-between realm, and Louis Kahn spoke of what a project wants to be on its own terms. Such a theory demands a new humility and a new investment of time, study and patience on the part of all participants—client users, artists, architects and builders.

Why cannot this challenge be infinitely more alluring than the easy choices offered along the Main Line strip—illuminated with the latest clichés of attraction leading nowhere? □

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# SOMETHING OLD... SOMETHING NEW

By Betty H. Meyer, Editor

**W**hat do you know about labyrinths? Do you know the difference between a maze and a labyrinth? While a maze may have dead ends or tricks to fool a visitor, a labyrinth is a single path that offers the walker an opportunity to look within in meditation while following a path to the center.

The design and use of a labyrinth to encourage spiritual exploration became popular during the Crusades when conflict in the Holy Land prevented Christians from making the required pilgrimage. The labyrinth became a substitute with Jerusalem as its entire goal. However, archaeologists say that the labyrinth actually predates Christianity, going back as far as 1300 B.C. Labyrinth designs have been found on Cretan coins and pottery on a rock carving in Sardinia, dating back to 2500-2000 B.C.

Little did medievalists know that these records of their spiritual journeys would be built anew in a modern world. Many more than a hundred labyrinths in churches, hospitals, city riverfronts, and prisons in the U.S. are listed on Web sites. The inner desire of people for inner peace continues, and walking a labyrinth seems to appease this hunger and lead to possible answers.

When Reverend Lauren Artress, a psychotherapist with a Divinity degree, attended a seminar in San Francisco with scholar Dr. Jean Houston, she was so impressed with the concept of the labyrinth that she traveled to Chartres Cathedral in France to walk the labyrinth laid there in 1200. When she returned she oversaw the building of two labyrinths at Grace Cathedral, one in the interior and one on the exterior. In workshops, she has trained 165 people on how to organize and design labyrinths for their areas.

The classical labyrinth has 11 circuits or concentric circles with a 12th forming a rosette at the center. The walk from entrance to center covers a third of a



One of the restored Formal Gardens in New Harmony, Indiana, designed and planted by the Harmonists as symbolic of various paths offered during one life and the reward for the correct choice.



Grace Cathedral, exterior labyrinth, San Francisco.

mile and takes 20 minutes to complete at a normal pace. Some are round in form, some square or octagonal, and some in the form of a cross.





PHOTO: © CINDY A. PAVLINAC

Grace Cathedral, Labyrinth Tapestry Inaugural Walk, Chartres Cathedral design, San Francisco, Calif.

An increasing number of churches are creating well-designed and well-built labyrinths as accepted additions to individual and group worship. Among them are St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, VA.; Wellesley Congregational Church, Wellesley, MA.; Riverside Church, New York City; and the Dominican Sisters, Saugerties, N.Y.

*Little did medievalists know that these records of their spiritual journeys would be built anew in a modern world.*

Grace Cathedral has recently completed a 24-hour accessible labyrinth in its interfaith garden and anticipates a more empowered, inclusive community. Rev. Ardress speaks of "creativity as a spiritual path, a rediscovery of the mystic tradition and the marriage of the Eastern and Western worlds." Her belief is echoed in the experience of writer Sig Lonegren, who built a labyrinth in Greensboro, VT, and his "walkers" have included Native Americans, Jews, Christians and Buddhists.

The old is being translated into the new! □

Don't Miss . . .

## IFRAA 2000: Images of Paradise

BOSTON • SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2000

IFRAA 2000—The Biennial Conference of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art & Architecture (IFRAA)—invites you to join participants and an impressive group of speakers this fall at the Andover Newton Theological School.

### Speakers:

- **Azim Nanji**, Ismaeli Institute, Aga Khan architectural prize jury
- **John Wesley Cook**, President, Henry Luce Foundation
- **The Rev. John Cryssavgis**, Holy Cross School of Theology, Hellenic College
- **Fernando Domeyko**, Senior Lecturer, School of Architecture & Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **John Wilson**, AIA, Payette Associates
- **Robin Jensen**, Institute Director, Andover Newton

### Exhibits

- Models of award-winning designs by Fernando Domeyko for a church in Las Brisas de Santo Domingo, Chile. Church models are in traveling exhibitions in main U.S. schools of architecture.
- 1999 and 2000 *Faith & Form* Award Winners
- 2000 Trade Show of Religious Art, Products and Services

For more information, contact IFRAA Director Ann Thompson: 202-626-7305 or [athompson@aia.org](mailto:athompson@aia.org)



IFRAA is a Professional Interest Area (PIA) of the AIA.  
IFRAA 2000 is cosponsored by IFRAA, *Faith & Form* magazine and the  
Andover Newton Theological School.

# DECONSTRUCTING CHRISTIANITY

By Carolyn Pione

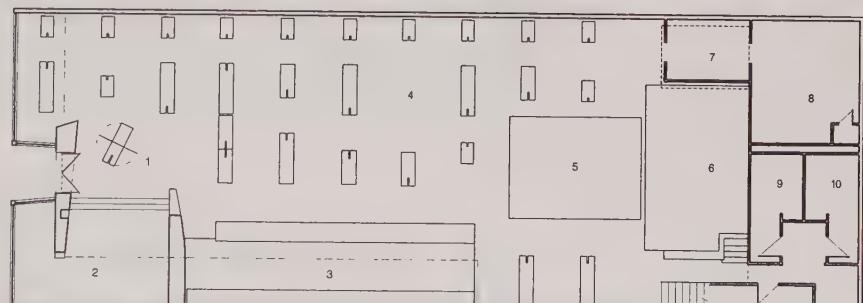
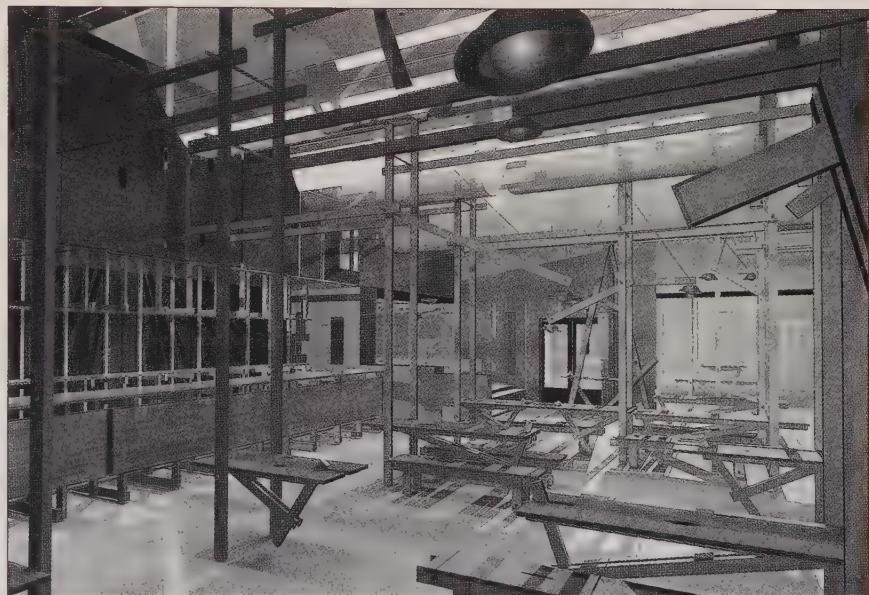


**T**he problem before the Vineyard Church in Mobile, Alabama, attracted architect David Baird's attention by what its congregation might call divine intervention.

He and his wife were visiting a Point Clear resort for a quiet weekend and decided to attend the nearest Vineyard church. After the service they chatted with members of the small congregation and learned about their planned move from the suburbs to downtown. The problem? The church had a non-existent budget and a plethora of ideas about how to spend it. The pastor of the growing community, Michael Woods, felt a calling to minister to the "Generation X" age group who frequented hip Dauphin Street downtown. But how to draw them off the street and through the door, especially with no budget?

For Baird, the problem presented a unique design challenge to create a space for worship while catching the interest of notoriously young cynics. He decided to keep the building the church had already rented and design a space that could double as a nightclub/coffee shop and worship center. The church had some specific needs—a reading room, a dressing room, bar and seating area. Its members wanted to present an image consistent with their church's mission—simple, utilitarian, and, most important, inexpensive.

"I wanted to create an interior architecture that had not been sanitized," says Baird. "I wanted to express the church's



ground level

Vineyard Church, Mobile, Alabama—designing a space that could double as a nightclub/coffee shop and worship center.

youthful sensibility and stripped-down approach to Christianity."

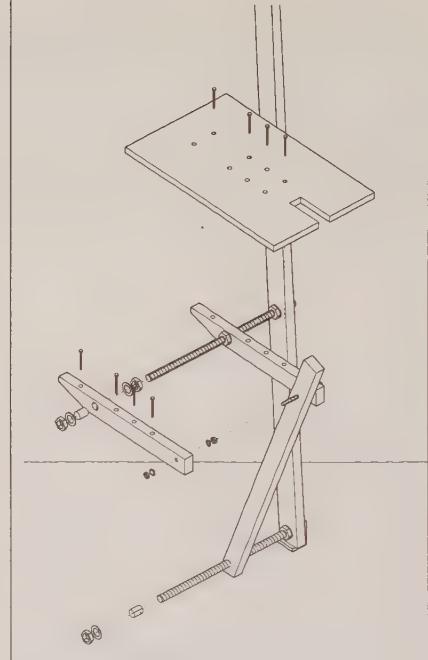
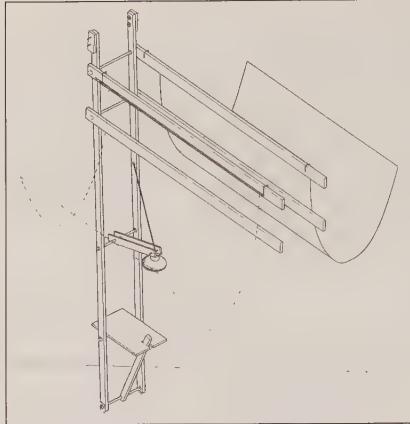
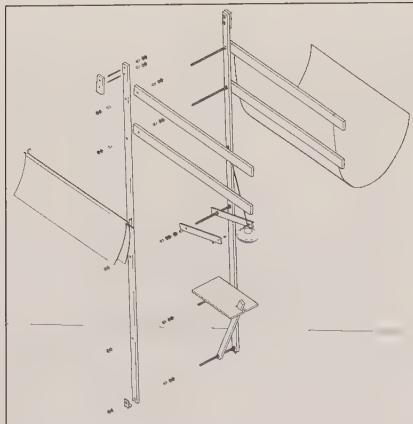
What Baird created was a design using materials from a home improvement store. He compiled a kit of parts the congregation could assemble themselves. The parts would transform the building shell into a multifunctional space but would also be removable should the

church relocate. "The idea was to create an architecture with off-the-shelf items that could be assembled with rudimentary skills and a minimum of craftsmanship," explains the architect.

The plans called for a stage and backroom for the Christian-oriented bands that would play to draw young crowds; a small bar that would serve soft drinks;

CAROLYN PIONE is a freelance reporter & editor in Baton Rouge, La.

DAVID BAIRD, architect/designer, is a professor in the School of Architecture at Louisiana State University. The intern architect for the project was Ivan Rupnick.



*The design used materials from a home improvement store that could be compiled into a kit of parts the congregation could assemble itself.*

and long, narrow tables that could be lifted vertically when more space was needed.

Baird believes that religious architecture should express the values and convictions of the people who use it. For the Vineyard, this meant reaching back to the simplicity of the early Christian church.

"Materials, including the bolts and screws, are exposed. Unfinished two-by-fours and plywood are sealed with a clear polyurethane," Baird comments. "It's an architecture that has not been disinfected." Curt Cloninger, a 27-year-old artist who serves as worship leader, says, "Part of what we do is to be normal, not polished just the way we are, and God will use that to appeal to people who are looking for a less-than-rehearsed church experience."

### Growing a Church

The Vineyard was founded in the mid-'70's with the idea of "doing an ancient thing in a contemporary way, according to its late founder John Wimber. There are more than 400 congregations around the country that meet wherever they can find space, whether in a renovated convenience store, casino, hotel, gym or strip mall.

The original Vineyard church was in a tiny metal building on Mobile's Eastern shore in 1997 in a family-oriented suburb. But Pastor Mike Woods decided to move the church downtown, believing, "You've got to fish where the fish are feeding." They haven't lost any members since the move and have picked up new members in their target range. Already 150 or so young people have wandered in to have coffee or to listen to the music.

"As an architect, David pointed us in the right direction, although we haven't

been able to implement it all," says Woods. "We researched not only our needs but also the history of the church and its mission." The architect comments, "Their budget was less than \$7,000, which ruled out conventional methods of construction. Saving \$50 was a big deal. They must remain in control of the budget and the outcome of the project. They implemented as many of the suggestions as they could but some things they say just happened."

Baird says he knew they might not have money to complete the plan, but he thought the process was still valuable to them and to him. "Architects don't know how to effectively partner with people like this and it keeps us from serving an untapped market. We need to rethink the way we do business so we can deliver an appropriate service to people of less means. I don't say I'm there yet, but I see this project as a step in the right direction."

The congregation's reaction to Baird's ideas were mixed; the younger people ran along the lines of "Oh, cool." The baby boomer generation, which included Michael Woods, was slightly bewildered, although it recognized the plans weren't designed to speak to it. But Kathy Starling, a 28-year-old grade-school teacher, said, "His design did speak to me because he explained why he had incorporated certain things. I don't know a thing about architecture, but I was impressed with all the things he took into account."

Another said: "David was the preacher the Sunday he came to make his presentation and he talked not just about the space but his ideas of cities and art."

A third parishioner observed: "Working with Baird and seeing the plans put the relationship between religion and archi-

*Table (6') assembly*

ecture into a whole new light. When you're a Christian, that's the most important thing, but if you're an artist that's almost as important. The church is often not that responsive to innovative art."

### An Architectural Philosophy

Baird knew the church's needs and financial limits were not mutually exclusive of good design. His challenge was to create something meaningful for the Vineyard members while teaching them about architecture.

"Architects communicate well with chairmen of the board but generally do a poor job relating to people of low to moderate means," he says. "Most people can't afford our services as they are currently structured. One reason I took this project was to explore ways of delivering a viable architectural service to this population. I also believe that, in a democratic system, the architectural profession risks being marginalized by ignoring the needs of the majority."

"The Vineyard people needed the project to work, they could only afford one space, and so that space had to serve several functions."

"Another characteristic is their need to be involved in the decisions being made. It's a big investment for them. Our post-modern culture is more concerned with image than with content. For the architectural profession, this has meant focusing on those who can afford to be preoccupied with image." □

# FINDING THE ETHICS IN ARCHITECTURE

By William Johnson Everett



The title *Faith & Form* gives evidence that architects and the religious public they serve have been discussing for some years how faith can find architectural form. How can a building express the key elements of a faith tradition? Religious groups seek more than a place to meet, they want a building that makes a statement of their faith and expresses their understanding of divine reality, work, and purpose.

The relationship between faith and form has been seen largely as a question of theology, of how we understand God. The religious building should help us grasp in some symbolic way the "is-ness" of God and how this relates to us. What has been hidden in this discussion between theology and architecture has been the question of the "Oughtness" that faith implies. Is there a connection between ethics and architecture? Can architecture imply how we ought to act in response to what we know of God? I would respond affirmatively. Ethics moves us from theological claims to questions of how we relate to one another, to the rest of creation, and to the divine source and end of our life.

The difficulty of this question was driven home to me two years ago when my wife and I were in South Africa for a few months. For some years she had kept a magazine article containing reference to a church in KwaZulu Natal built in the

form of a Zulu chief's house. We were able to track down the location of "Nchengabantu" (Church of the Ascension) and Fr. Anton Maier, who had designed it. A priest from the Archdiocese of Augsburg, he had spent more than 20 years in ministry among the Zulu. He led us to a remote area several hours north of Durban, where we came upon a, round, domed structure standing like a squat silo in an isolated field. While the traditional thatched roof had been

a Madonna, presenting to us not a babe but a young warrior son, spear in hand, ready to take on the powers outside. The Madonna was adorned with Zulu bead-work. Staircases curved up either side of the inside wall from the Madonna, leading women to the left and men to the right.

The inside of the church was round, with one quadrant taken up by a wall where normally, in a chief's house, the ancestral spirits would be revealed in ceremonial artifacts. In its slight curve a round stone altar table stood like a mill-stone, the eucharistic focal point of the church. The tabernacle storing the communion bread was at the right end of the wall. In the wall's center was suspended a carving of an ascending Christ, and at the other end a weaving depicting the people of Israel passing through the Red Sea. The weaving backdropped a wooden pillar with the same theme carved into it. Both framed a baptismal pool. Jewish traditions that formed

early Christian practices were thus represented in the context of African culture. Benches curved around the altar wall. Because of the domed construction voices carried mysteriously across the space as a catechism class met in the shadows across the room. The work of conversion at the baptismal Red Sea was being ardently traced out in the minds of the young.

In this exquisite detail and powerful simplicity Nchengabantu Church reflected an imaginative rendering of theological claims within a culture far from their origin, yet the whole held together within the aesthetic of Zulu culture. It



Exterior, Nchengabantu Church of the Ascension, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. From *Christliche Kunst in Afrika*, ed. J.F. Thiel and H. Helf (Berlin: Reimer Verlage, 1984).

replaced by metal with sturdy lightning protection, it clearly had the form of the traditional chief's home. Ordinarily, such a home would have over the door the horns of a bull, slaughtered in honor of the chief or his exploits. But here a symbol of a final sacrifice, a crucifix, hung instead. The form was the same but the content had been changed to convey a faith claim: that sacrifices were over, that people and animals could live in love and peace. We were soon to find that this enculturation of faith was shown in every aspect of the building. The single low door made us bow to enter. We were confronted immediately by a wood carving of

WILLIAM JOHNSON EVERETT is the Herbert Gezork Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Andover Newton Theological School. His book *The Politics of Worship: Reforming the Language and Symbols of Liturgy*, was recently published by United Church Press.

was only after leaving the church that I realized how this architectural marriage of faith and form needed to be assessed for its ethical implications as well. As someone steeped in the ethics of democratic public life, I couldn't help but reflect on the way the patriarchal and monarchical images of power and authority shaped by Christianity's European experience had been grafted almost seamlessly on to Zulu culture. The endless feuds of medieval European life were echoed by the intractable "faction fighting" that flamed up regularly around this rural Zulu parish. Was the sophisticated theological statement made by the church reinforcing a political culture that undermines South Africa's fledgling democracy? Or was it taking the path of first reconstructing the theological basis of that culture before approaching the task of ethical change? Would the traditional sacrifice of bulls in honor of the chief be transmuted in their minds into the ultimate sacrifice of a non-violent prophet? Would this symbolic reconstruction begin to reshape the ethics of their culture? Would the roundness of the building promote the debate of an assembly of equals

rather than the rites of humble homage to the chief? Would the separation of men and women at the feet of the Madonna be overcome by their reunion in the sacred circle on the floor above? How was this building and the rites within it mediating among the symbols of European monarchy, Zulu kingship, South African constitutional democracy and a New Order yet to come?

The experience at Nchingabantu can find echoes in any church structure that seeks to marry traditional faith to indigenous form. A Meeting House style reflects the town meeting and educational heritage of New England, giving primacy to the spoken word and personal reflection. The ornate basilica reflects a Mediterranean heritage that speaks of

the ceremonies of initiation into a cosmic sovereignty. The tabernacle pavilion serves the purpose of evoking deep emotional conversion under the impact of the preacher and the choir. The warm Lutheran A Frame chapel invokes the familial and grace-full intimacy of northern woods and cozy homes – a comfort in a winter storm. All these forms reflect a statement about God and God's relationship to us – as Word, as Ruler, as transforming Spirit, and as trustworthy Comforter. But how do these theological themes relate to ethical norms? What do these say about our rights, duties, and proper relations? What do they say about the proper forms of just governance or ecological responsibility? Does religious

hierarchical relations. Historically, these have been relations of command and obedience between monarchs and subjects, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants.

A democratic spirit immediately recoils from this paradigm, not because it lacks a certain beauty but because it presents an opposing, even "wrong," model of relationships. From the standpoint of a democratic ethos the religious building needs to present patterns of relationships among equals. This ethos would require that it be shaped more by horizontals than verticals. Steps, levels, and high ceilings should give way to open, round spaces of assembly. One could argue that light from above should

yield to light from the side, and a single focus for the building should yield to multiple foci. The steps of hierarchy in this shift would become smooth ramps for the handicapped in the democracy of participation for all. Within this democratic perspective architects would focus on churches and synagogues as places of assembly, discussion, debate, and mutual recognition, and also as changeable spaces for ever-shifting judgments by the people. The round or octagonal

church would not need the long narrow nave. Such a shift is both theological and ethical. It is theological in that roundness emphasizes the free movement of the Spirit among the people. It is ethical in that it encourages face-to-face encounter and mutual responsibility among people informed by that Spirit.

In order to explore this connection with my students I often ask them to identify where the Bible is in their worship services. For some it always rests on a table below the pulpit, for others on the pulpit itself, for others on the altar or in the hands of the congregants. I then ask them to think about how the Bible's location establishes the source of authority in that congregation. The placement of the Bible (or any sacred object)



Interior, Nchengabantu Church of the Ascension, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. From *Christliche Kunst in Afrika*, ed. J.F. Thiel and H. Helf (Berlin: Reimer Verlage, 1984).

architecture also form these?

In this brief article I can only outline a few steps to take in our reflection. A first step is to ask how the building itself represents a pattern of right relationships among people. How does its form express a pattern of power and authority? Verticality, for instance, has almost always been related to hierarchical models of governance, not only between God and humanity but also between rulers and ruled. Whether this verticality is expressed in soaring ceilings, long naves, steps, or elevations, the building itself presents hierarchy as normative in human relationships. The nave establishes the fixed centrality of the speaker of the Word or performer of the rite. This architecture tells us to act in accord with

is a statement about the location of ecclesial authority. This model of authority then becomes a model for authority in the wider society. At this point the students are able to enter into an ethical critique of worship: how we should organize ourselves, who should have authority under what conditions, and what is the nature of true power and just order? Sensitivity to the modeling of power and authority should inform the construction of a worship space and the activities that go on in it.

Whether people accept the building's norm is another matter. The building may set forth a desirable pattern of movement and interaction, and hopefully people will adopt it as their own. However, I realize that in some churches built in the round people have not heard the message and simply reconstructed a nave within the circle or chosen furnishings that still speak the language of patriarchy, monarchy, or divine dictatorship. They push the table to the wall, line up the chairs, and wait to hear what their leader has to say. Yet the building will still speak its own norms. The congregation will live in a tension between its

voice and that of the building.

Yet another set of ethical decisions involves how people relate to the rest of creation, the question of ecological ethics. What kinds of materials should be used in construction? What energy resources are to be used? How dependent is the plan on the extensive use of the automobile? What statement does it make about the relationship between human and natural design? This ecological question has two aspects. The first involves the "human ecology" of society, the second involves the relation of humans to non-human life.

With regard to social ecology, a building can symbolize a whole social order, along with religion's place in it. The New England Meeting House, the Gothic Cathedral, the mall-like campus, and the concrete monument are only a few examples. The building's ethical function is to set forth an image of the normative "city," a kind of heavenly city on earth. It represents ethical choices about the nature of the good life and how people should live together.

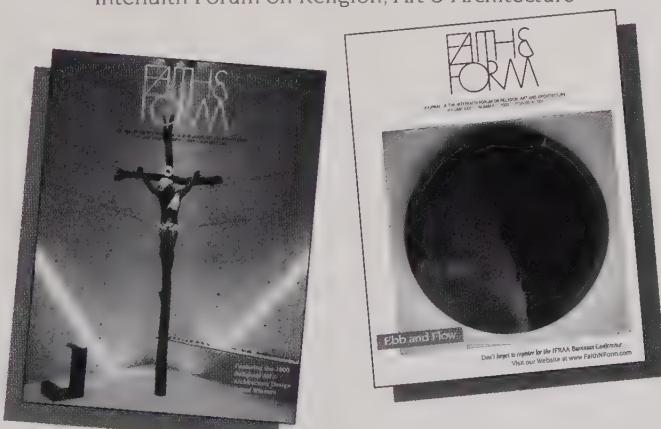
The wider ecological question asks how we ought to relate to other animals,

to the earth, air, and water. Classic church designs emphasized the relation of people to the sky and to the God set over and above the earth. An ecological sensibility opens up the walls so that people can see their relation to the rest of creation—to gardens, woods, waters, and natural settings. It calls us to seek out responsible relationships with the creatures and elements of this world and to treat them with the dignity God has extended to us.

Implicit, even intuitive, ethical convictions have shaped religious architecture in the past. However, we need to reflect more explicitly and with greater sophistication about the connections between ethics and architecture. This does not mean that a building should become an ethical proposition! Aesthetics and human response are much more complex than that. However, buildings do have a dominant trajectory. They do have an ethical message, even though it is often polyphonic and sometimes out of key. I hope we will attune our ears to ethical music so that faith and form can be better united in the daily lives of the people who worship in these sacred spaces. □



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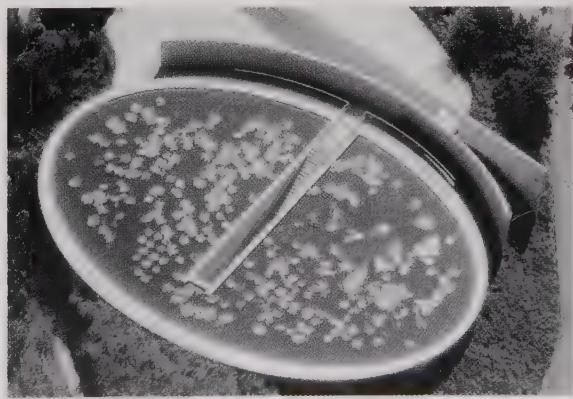
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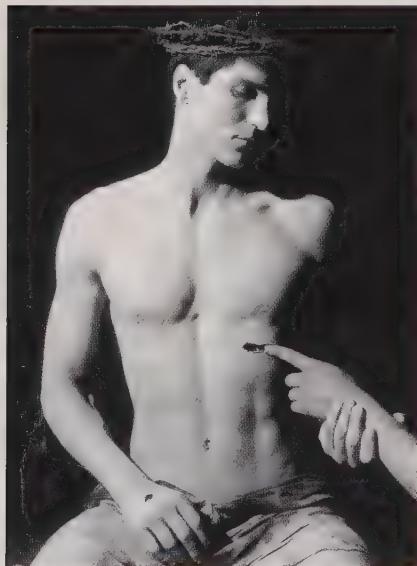


# THE ART OF FAITH

By Michael J. Crosbie



**F**aith: *The Impact of Judeo-Christian Religion on Art at the Millennium*, a recent exhibit at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut, brought together under one roof (and also in four houses of worship in Ridgefield) the works of more than 20 artists from six countries around the world who incorporate religious themes in their work.



"Doubting Thomas," 1997 by Bettina Rheims and Serge Bramly.

What is so radical about that? you might ask. After all, if one were to catalogue all the works of art ever produced, religion would easily come out on top as the most pervasive theme. But *Faith* takes a different approach. In an age when reli-

gion, as it is conceived in the West's Judeo-Christian tradition, has nearly been obliterated not only from popular culture but also from the realm of the established art world, how does this tradition continue to influence contemporary artists, and how is it reflected in their work? How is it augmented, portrayed, and commented upon?

The show was curated by the Aldrich's director, Harry Philbrick, along with artists Christian Eckart and Osvaldo Romberg. Philbrick notes, "Faith is ultimately not a religious exhibition; nor, however, is it a secular exhibition. It is built firmly on two presumptions, as are the great religions: that we are, as flesh and blood mortals, transient beings; and that there is a higher order or plan to which we aspire."

One of the show's most novel aspects was the exhibit of artworks in nearby

sacred spaces. Philbrick writes in the show's catalogue: "We felt strongly that it was important to collaborate with local churches and synagogues, to attempt to bring art out of the museum and into local houses of worship. At the same time, we hope that this exhibition will bring members of those congregations into the museum."

The range of work and the themes explored in the artworks, a number of which are shown here, are impressive. Artist Rev. Ethan Acres, D.D., incorporates a sense of childlike awe and gentle humor in his work, while Roland Fischer's compositions of Gothic cathedrals reflect the dichotomy of public and private realms in people and buildings. One of Nicholas Kripal's creations of upturned churches, which expose their innards to heaven, takes the local St. Stephen's Episcopal Church as its content. Jo



"Gardening Sukkah," 1999 by Allan Wexler. Mixed media.



"Miracle at La Brea," 1997 by Rev. Ethan Acres. Screenprint on mylar.



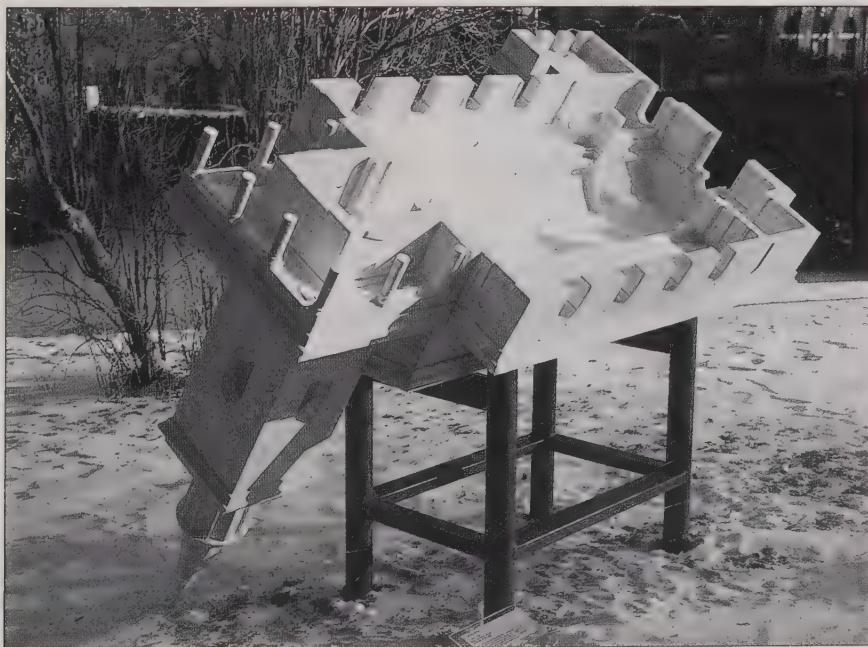
"Tikkun Olam," 1999 by Jo Yarrington.

*"Faith is built firmly on two presumptions, as are the great religions: that we are, as flesh and blood mortals, transient beings; and that there is a higher order or plan to which we aspire."*

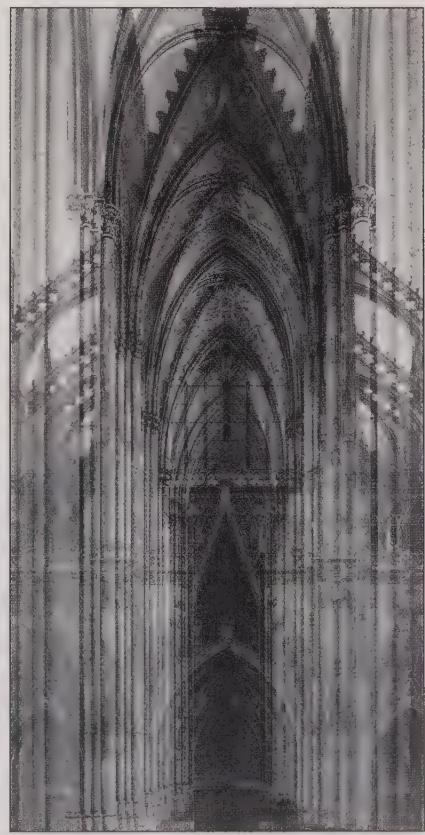
Yarrington's photographic works, displayed at the museum as well as at local churches (such as the United Methodist Church), explore the themes of iconography and rebirth. Andres Serrano's Budapest (Mass) brings us as voyeurs

into a private, spiritual moment.

The works exhibited in *Faith* remind us of the lasting impression that religion continues to have on contemporary artists and the myriad ways it is made manifest. □



"Crown," 1999 by Nicholas Kripal. Cast concrete and steel



Untitled, Köln, 1999 by Roland Fischer.

# METAPHORS OF FAITH

By Edward Sövik



I once visited the Naiku at Ise, the oldest of Japanese shrines, where the Emperor journeys annually to hallow the new year. You cross first the rushing Isuzu river on a fine wooden bridge and enter a small park of groomed fruit and flowering trees. Then you move on a broad pathway into a dense forest of ancient cryptomerias, the Japanese cedar that grows straight and very tall. The walk brings you to the precincts of the elemental but elegant wooden buildings that are reconstructed every 20 years on megalithic platforms. You can't enter, but proceed farther in a loop to emerge again at the entrance park. When I came out of the great forest, I took a deep breath and suddenly realized that for a long time I hadn't done so; I had been so laden with the experience that even my breathing was affected.

I suppose that all of us have had, and have, experiences where our surroundings urge themselves upon us in similar ways, where the sense of profundity, mystery, and elemental reality are such that we have intimations of Ultimate Being. And we think of these often, as religious moments. They come in many, many ways—sometimes in nature, on the ocean or in the mountains; sometimes in art, in music, or in poetry. Sometimes they are triggered by little things too—the loveliness of a flower, or a baby's hand, or the moment when we reflect on the marvel of our own hearts' beatings. Sometimes it is a painting that moves us, sometimes architecture—which is what I want here to ponder. Always it brings us

to reflection, and we have a sense that we live, as Wallace Stevens says, "In a country that is not our own." These are, I suppose, what we call the foundations of religion, the intuitions that there is beyond all a Divinity "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

If we seek to deal with the architecture of religion, the first concern, I should think, is to build a place that breathes those intuitions to life, that invites us to reflect and beckons us to wonder. But what kind of architecture does this? What is the formula, if there is one, that can make architecture a metaphor of faith?

*The architecture that issues from the ethic of love, if I may speculate briefly, would be gracious, hospitable, generous, humane.*

truth by rational processes: the religionist usually admits to the possibility of non-rational or suprarational perceptions as well. But both seek truth.

And if an architect intends in the spaces and places he designs to reflect the search for reality, and by reflecting it encourages it, it is, I should think, almost axiomatic that the architecture should be utterly candid, without illusions, artificialities or dissimulations. Examples of this sort of work—of living without masks and beyond conventions—are not uncommon. Cistercian monasteries, puritan buildings like the "Old Ship" Meeting House, and almost any of Mies van der Rohe's buildings qualify. The Japanese tea house is another example, consciously calculated to bring people into an open and forthright kind of interaction.

If one aspect of truth is authenticity, another is carried in the word "integrity," wholeness. And this aspect can also be reflected in architecture. Architecture can have an internal integrity, a coherence of form; it can also establish a larger coherence. It has been called the bridge between man and the universe, the simplest example of this being the common tendency of buildings to orient structure, recognizing a relationship to celestial bodies or the poles of the geosphere.

A second basic factor in the life of religious people is the ethical. All religions speak to the issues of behavior, the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong actions. People, even the most religious people, don't agree on what is right and wrong; but the commitment to what is right is earnest, and institutional religion always aims to be on the side of the good.

The architecture of religion reflects a variety of definitions of the good. For people of the Judeo-Christian tradition,

EDWARD SÖVIK, FAIA, is well known to IFRAA members as a speaker, writer and theologian as well as an architect. He recently retired from Sövik, Mathre Sathrum Quanbeck Schlink Edwins in Northfield, MN, but still is as active and interested in religious architecture as ever.

the good is generally defined as that kind of behavior which honors every human, that values life and seeks the welfare of all—the ethics of love. This is something different from an ethic of order, for instance, which implies power and whose architectural symbol may be monumental and static. It is something different also, perhaps, from the ethic of justice, or an ethic that places liberty at the pinnacle of values; these are political ethics, but I think not religious ones. They also have their architectural expressions.

The architecture that issues from the ethic of love, if I may speculate briefly, would be gracious, hospitable, generous, humane. One might again call up as an example the Japanese tea house, but more familiar images might come from the domestic scene because almost all our homes aim to be expressions of hospitality. All architecture cannot be and should not be domestic in all respects, of course. But it is clear that even large buildings can be, like a good host, companionable rather than oratorical, gracious rather than manipulative, courteous rather than peremptory. Buildings that are the expressions of love don't overwhelm even when they are big; they don't aim to dominate, but to serve, they are habitations not monuments; they are not likely to be understood as large scale objects of art, to be looked at but not touched; the word "haptic," which implies that a building invites a sort of continuous sensual interaction or friendly dialog, describes an appropriate quality.

The third quality, and surely the most important, of religious architecture is what Otto calls the "numinous." It is the quality that brings us to a sense of wonder, to the consciousness that our existence is finally suspended in a magnificent Mystery, a Mystery that is paradoxically fascinating and awesome, close at hand, yet beyond comprehension.

Architects have often ventured to suggest the presence of this Mystery by architectural artifices, by tricks of lighting, by exotic and surprising forms and spaces, by darkness, or by extraordinary opulence. This is to misunderstand. For like the mystery of a detective story, that which is at first mysterious because it is strange, becomes familiar, the tricky can be resolved, the darkness penetrated. But the real Mystery is permanent; its magnificence and wonder do not pall nor does its glow grow dim. So artifices are a

poor metaphor.

It is, as I have suggested, possible for architecture to be the architecture of truth, to be a symbol, an evocation, an echo of the commitment of religion to reality. It becomes such a thing, an appropriate place for religious people, by being itself a truthful, ingenuous and coherent work. It is also possible for a building to be an affective symbol of goodness, by supplying a humane, gracious and hospitable environment. In each of these two examples, architecture, as symbol, participates in the nature of the thing symbolized; this is a characteristic of good symbols. But how can architecture come to be a symbol of the Ultimate Mystery?

*The 'numinous' is the quality that brings us to a sense of wonder, to the consciousness that our existence is finally suspended in a magnificent Mystery.*

I think both history and experience teach us that there is only one way. That is by being beautiful. For beauty is also a mystery. The beautiful thing, like the Ultimate Mystery, presents itself not discursively through reason, but directly. Like the Ultimate Mystery, it is ineffable, unfactorable. We cannot synthesize or analyze beauty; it is of infinite variety, innumerable forms. But when we perceive it we are moved to a sense of wonder. And this wonder, when we reflect on it—this lesser wonder, whether it be the beauty of nature or of art—invites us, when we are open, into the presence of the Greater Wonder, whom we call God. So beauty, not a particular beauty, but simply beauty, is the image we seek.

Two conclusions follow. The first is that if architecture intends to provide an appropriate place for the religious celebration or for the religious community, there is a basic and fundamental requirement: it must be a beautiful place. Ugliness is sacrilege; it is a rejection of

the numinous. The dull, the banal, the run of the mill, the commonplace, the prosaic, the merely useful and efficient, even the clever or ingenious are unacceptable. Beauty, that elusive thing, that butterfly—beauty is the touchstone. It may be that it is the product of patience, labor and trouble, of imagination and sensibility, or it may be that if—as Eric Gill asserted—if we take care of truth and goodness, beauty will take care of herself. In any event, no architecture that is less than a work of art is close to being the appropriate architecture of religion.

A second conclusion appears also, and it presents architects and their clients with a broader challenge. People in our society who admit to being religious agree that their faith is comprehensive. It engages not only their cultic experience, the times when they are in church or synagogue, but all of their lives. And if all of life is thus a religious life, then all of architecture, all of our environment ought properly to be numinous. All of our architecture should be real, and hospitable, and beautiful, so that whatever we are, at work or at home or at play, we may be surrounded by those qualities that recall us from time to time to live authentically, to live humanely, and to live in the consciousness of God.

There is, if one takes this position seriously, no difference of basic values in the way an architect approaches the design of a church building and the design of a factory or of any so-called secular work of architecture. The differences are differences of function, of technology, of artifacts, and in the symbolic devices that accrue to, but do not belong to architecture, like the cross on a church and the flag on City Hall. If one takes what I have said seriously, he may reflect that much church architecture is not appropriately religious at all, and that many so-called secular buildings are.

And if you look around, you will discover that indeed that is true. And one may speculate that all of the greatest architecture in the human heritage can be called religious, although it is not necessarily cultic. And again, I think this is a fair assumption. And what this says is not so much about the architecture as about the people who accomplished it and the people who cherish it. What it says is that at our best, we humans grope with uncertain hands for the treasures of truth and goodness, and listen for those distant trumpets that call from "the hidden battlements of eternity." □

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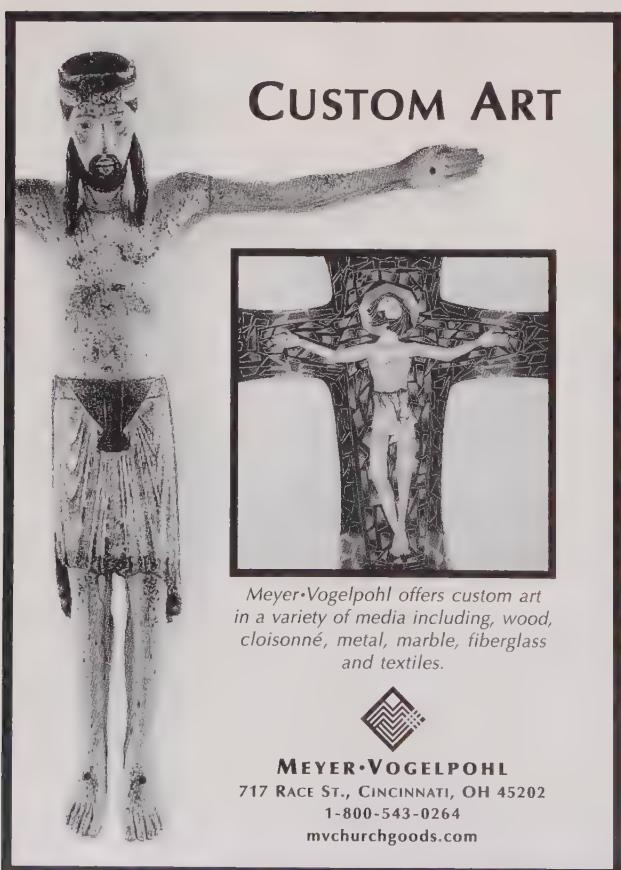
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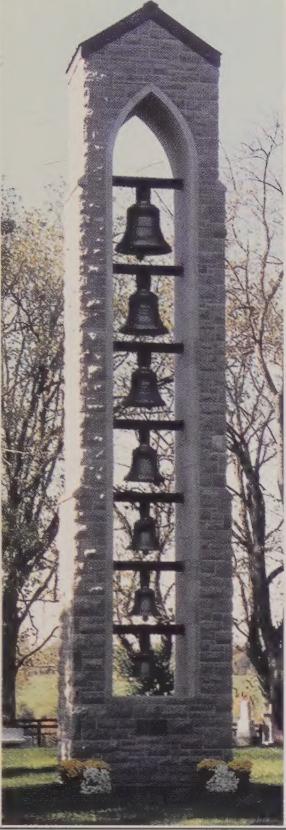
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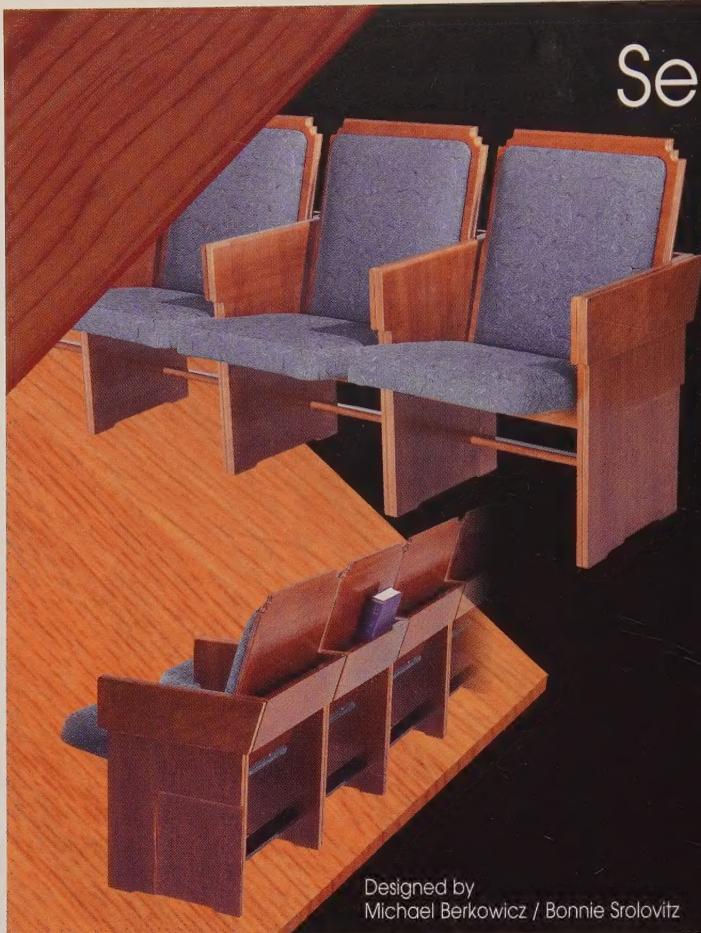
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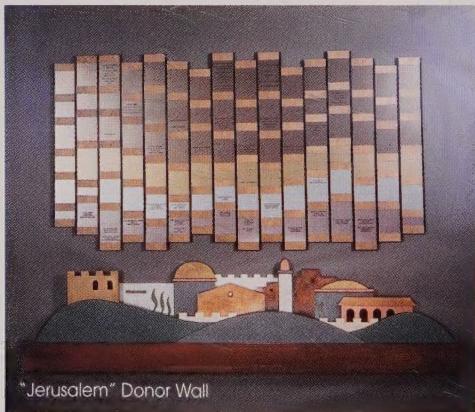
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